

Convertible Blanket

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Field of the Invention

[0001] The present specification relates to blankets that are convertible between at least two modes of operation.

[0002] The present invention is intended to solve the problem of children bringing their duvets or quilts downstairs from the bedroom to wrap around themselves, for example, whilst they watch television.

[0003] Alternatively, there could be a quilted or fleecy blanket or 'throw' left in the TV room that they can wrap around themselves but this has to be folded and may be left untidily on a settee or chair.

[0004] If the normal bedding, e.g., duvet or quilt is brought downstairs, then it is often wrapped around the child like a 'cloak'. If the child gets up and moves, it falls off.

[0005] The present invention, at least in its preferred forms, is designed to solve these and other problems.

[0006] In its simplest form, there is provided a blanket having a pocket into which the blanket may be stuffed. The stuffed pocket can then function as a cushion or pillow. Preferably the stuffed pocket also has some amusement function, for example use as a stuffed toy or novelty item.

[0007] Thus, viewed from a first aspect the present invention provides a convertible blanket comprising:

[0008] a blanket made of fabric material; and

[0009] a pocket, the pocket being attached to the blanket and being of a size to receive the blanket for storage, the pocket having a perimeter, along at least a portion of which it is joined to the blanket, and being provided with an opening for receiving the blanket.

[0010] The pocket may comprise a piece of material that is sewn onto one side of the blanket. The pocket material may be the same as the blanket or a different material. It may be made from a different colour fabric. In another embodiment, the

pocket may take the form of a small bag having front and rear sides which is joined to the blanket close to its opening.

[0011] The pocket may be used in that form as attached to the blanket, with the blanket being stowed inside, or the pocket may be reversed prior to insertion of the blanket. For example, to stow the blanket, the pocket may be turned inside out and the blanket then stuffed inside. In such an embodiment, the external surface of the pocket with the blanket removed forms the interior of the pocket when it receives the blanket, and similarly the internal surface of the pocket becomes the exterior when it is stuffed with the stowed blanket.

[0012] The blanket is preferably made of a soft man-made fleece type material, for example, like those manufactured under the Polartec (registered trade mark) name, which are warm, lightweight and easy to wash. Preferably the fabric of the blanket is at least 5mm thick, more preferably more than 7mm thick.

[0013] However, the term "blanket" used herein is not intended to be interpreted narrowly, e.g., in the sense of a thick sheet, but is intended to cover thin sheets, comfort blankets, throws, towels, padded bedding such as duvets and quilts, sleeping bags or sleeping sacks and other such soft bedding or similar item of a breathable woven fabric material, e.g., cotton or wool, or man-made fleecy materials that a young child may wish to wrap around themselves whilst they watch television. In the case of duvets and quilts which are usually kept in a washable duvet cover, a cover provided with a pocket in accordance with the present invention is within the term "blanket" used herein. In such a case the pocket is of a size to receive the cover and the duvet or quilt contained therein.

[0014] Viewed from another aspect, the present invention provides a convertible blanket comprising:

[0015] a blanket in the form of a substantially rectangular area of fabric having a first edge and a substantially parallel second edge

[0016] a pocket attached to the blanket, the pocket being of a size for receiving the blanket; and

[0017] a fastener provided along a first edge of the blanket for fastening said first edge to said second edge of the blanket.

[0018] This provides the advantage that the convertible blanket has greater functionality (3 in 1 uses) and therefore more likely to be used by the child. The blanket is convertible for use in three modes of operation of:

[0019] 1) blanket being extended for use as a blanket

[0020] 2) blanket being received in the pocket for use as a pillow or cushion;
and

[0021] 3) blanket being fastened along said first edge to said second edge for use as a sleeping bag.

[0022] Preferably the pocket is intended to take the form of an amusement object when it is stuffed with the blanket. For example, the perimeter of the pocket may be of a shape corresponding to: a ball such as a football (a round or oval shaped football), baseball, basketball, netball, tennis ball, golf ball or similar; a crown or other shape that might be used by a manufacturer as a trade mark, for example, on children's toys; a heart shape or other everyday shape like a flower, vegetable, phone; a head, foot, paw or body of an animal, monster, alien-being or dinosaur; a fish or crustacean; a bird, bat or other flying creature; a cartoon character or a head of a famous person, etc. The pocket may be patterned with additional pieces of fabric or be printed to reinforce the appearance of the amusement object. The additional pieces of fabric may have different textures.

[0023] To receive the blanket, the pocket opening is preferably greater than 15cm and more preferably greater than 20cm to allow the blanket to be stuffed inside easily, but is preferably less than 70cm and more preferably less than 50cm to avoid the opening being too large, which could make it difficult to stuff the pocket. The opening is preferably in the form of a slit, though additional side webs of fabric could be included to expand the opening where necessary. The pocket may extend in one dimension for a length of greater than 25cm and preferably greater than 30cm. Depending on the shape of the pocket, this may be in a direction that is substantially parallel to the opening. The pocket may also need to extend greater than 25cm and preferably greater than 30 cm in a perpendicular direction to provide adequate accommodation for the blanket without the stuffed pocket feeling too firm for use as a soft cushion or pillow.

[0024] In one embodiment, the pocket has decoration on its inside, e.g., in the form of a printed pattern or fabric features, and is preferably also of a corresponding

shape so that when it is turned inside out it depicts a fun object such as an animal, dinosaur, fish, character, toy, vehicle, monster, etc., or a portion of such an object, e.g., a head of a teddy bear. When the blanket is stowed within the pocket, the stuffed pocket then serves as a toy or novelty cushion. It may also be used as a pillow.

[0025] Providing the decoration on the inside of the pocket also adds a "surprise" factor to the product which can add to the child's enjoyment. When the blanket, perhaps depicting one scene or character, is stowed, another character or animal can be created by the stuffed pocket, providing a distinction between television watching time and other activities such as getting ready for bed.

[0026] Preferably both sides of the interior of the pocket include decoration. In one embodiment the decoration depicts a different object on different sides so that the stuffed object is reversible. This may be of advantage where the stuffed object is in the form of a cushion which is intended to be left stowed, for example, on seating in the room, where its reversibility could allow different colours or object depictions to be chosen depending on the mood of the parent.

[0027] The pocket could also include straps or other carrying aid which is revealed when the pocket is turned inside out, for example, shoulder straps so that the child can carry the stuffed toy on his or her back, or a waist strap for carrying it around his or her waist. In this way the straps can be stowed safely in the pocket when the blanket has been pulled out and the pocket reversed. A zip, hook and eye material, press fasteners, buttons or other fastening device can be used to close the pocket. The straps or the like may also form part of the overall design that the stuffed pocket is intended to replicate, for example, as arms and / or legs of an animal, which then hug around the child when it is being carried and may be foam or perhaps air filled.

[0028] When not filled with the blanket, the pocket may be used for storing sweets and toys, depending on its orientation with respect to the blanket. It could also be used to store the remote control so that it does not become lost behind the sofa. In another embodiment, the pocket may be positioned to receive the feet of the child to keep the child's feet warm when watching television.

[0029] Buttons, hook and eye material or other fastening means may be provided to attach the pocket to the blanket so that it can be removed for washing of

the blanket. However, it is most preferred to provide an integral pocket that is permanently attached to the blanket through sewing or similar operation.

[0030] The invention is not limited to children's products and may also have appeal to an adult market, for example, as a cosy blanket that is kept in the television room for cuddling up into when watching the television. In such situations, the stuffed object may have more of an adult theme, possibly depicting more grown up shapes or presenting an external form that imitates a conventional cushion when the blanket is stowed. Such blankets for adults will be generally larger and will stow to form a larger stuffed object, perhaps forming a "bean bag" type seat. The concept of providing a "bean bag" seat would also be applicable to a child's product.

[0031] In accordance with a further aspect of this invention, a blanket is provided with a hood which is stored in a pocket when not in use. Preferably the blanket is a cover for a duvet or quilt. Once released from its pocket, the hood can be worn over the head of the user so that the blanket can be worn as a hooded cloak. Preferably the hood includes drawstrings, elastic or similar tensioners to pull the hood close around the head of the user. The hood may include features or be printed to resemble an object such as an animal, fish, dinosaur, character etc, or portion thereof, preferably in conjunction with printing or decoration on the blanket. For example fabric ears or other feature could be provided. The hood is preferably open at the face portion, but may include fabric, for example to form a mask to imitate a character such as a cloaked superhero, e.g., Batman or Superman. Preferably the hood is provided halfway along one edge, but may also be provided at one corner.

[0032] Preferably fastening means is provided, e.g., in the form of hook and eye type material, lace or buckle, to allow the blanket to be secured around the shoulders of the user so that the user can walk around with the blanket still in place and keeping the user warm. The position of the fastening means should be at about shoulder level when worn.

[0033] In the preferred embodiments, the blanket also includes the stowing pocket described above. It is also envisaged that the hood could be retained within the blanket stowing pocket. In another embodiment, the hood could form a pocket for stowing the blanket.

[0034] Certain preferred embodiments will now be described in more detail by way of example only and with reference to the accompanying drawings in which:

[0035] Figure 1 illustrates a blanket or quilt having a pocket;

[0036] Figure 2 illustrates a sleeping bag having a pocket;

[0037] Figure 3 illustrates a quilt having a pocket and which has been provided with a hood and fastening straps;

[0038] Figure 4 illustrates the interior of the pocket, when reversed and stuffed with the blanket, as a front view;

[0039] Figure 5 illustrates the stuffed pocket of Figure 4 from above; and

[0040] Figure 6 illustrates a blanket with a hood extracted, ready for wearing as a cloak.

[0041] As described above, there is provided a blanket 1, preferably made from a substantially rectangular piece of soft fleecy material (see Figure 1) with a sewn-on shaped pocket 2 on one side. The blanket 1 could also be made from several pieces of fabric that have been sewn together. The blanket 1 should be of a suitable size to fit easily around the age group of child that it is intended to be for. In general this will mean edge dimensions of between 1 to 2 metres, and preferably dimensions of about 120cm by 150cm.

[0042] To store the blanket 1 away, the user simply reaches inside the opening of the pocket 3 and grabs a handful of blanket 1 and pulls it out of the pocket 2, thereby creating a 'hollow' on the reverse side. The user then turns the blanket 1 over and literally 'stuffs' the entire blanket 1 into this 'hollow'. As the last of the blanket 1 is pushed into the hollow, the sewn-on pocket 2 reverses itself inside out, therefore taking up the shape of the pocket 2 and showing the decoration that was previously inside the pocket as shown in Figure 4. This pocket 2 preferably has decoration on both sides of it with an opening 3 (see Figure 5).

[0043] Any attractive shape or form can be used for the pocket 2, for example, simple animals, fish, teddy bear faces, etc., and the decoration can either be simply printed on or become much more complex with additional shaped features added, for example, with a teddy bear's ears or nose.

[0044] The resulting item is a soft, shaped cushion that can be left, simply and unobtrusively, on a chair (see Figure 4). To convert the item back into a blanket 1, you simply reverse the process and pull all the blanket 1 out of the opening 3 in the cushion, until the cover of the cushion itself reverses itself back into being the pocket 2 on the original blanket 1.

[0045] The blanket 1 can also be a simple open tube with an opening 4, but closed at the bottom, so that the user gets into it to remain warm but otherwise, it functions in exactly the same way as the blanket 1 when converting into a cushion (see Figure 2).

[0046] In a further embodiment, the blanket of Figure 1 may be also convertible into a sleeping bag type of structure by providing a zip fastener along one of the edges, and preferably along a base and opposed side edges as is known for conventional sleeping bags, for example, as with the embodiment of Figure 2.

[0047] The positioning of the pocket 2 is not critical, although if the convertible blanket is also intended for use as a sleeping bag, it is preferable to position the pocket so that it is off to one side when being used as a blanket 1 (e.g., in the quarter or three quarters position). In this way the pocket 2 will be positioned more centrally when the blanket 1 has been folded in half for use as a sleeping bag.

[0048] If desired, a second large pocket may be provided on the blanket 1, for example, in positions corresponding to the front and back of a sleeping bag. A second large pocket 2 may be provided on the reverse of the blanket 1. In one embodiment, this may provide a large pocket 2 within the sleeping bag for holding a hot water bottle. The additional pocket 2 might portray a different amusement object so that the child or adult has a choice of form and / or colour for the stuffed cushion / pillow mode.

[0049] As shown in Figure 3, a further extension of this concept is to sew the same open pocket feature 2 into a normal continental quilt cover or duvet cover 1. In this embodiment, the sewn-on pocket 2 is made much larger to accept the larger bulk of the quilt itself, but otherwise it functions in exactly the same way. When the entire quilt 1 is 'stuffed' into the pocket 2, the resulting large shaped object can be used as a large pillow or 'bean bag' style of chair.

[0050] Preferably in this embodiment, there are two other features that can be built into the duvet cover 1 itself. One feature allows for another small internal pocket 5 in the middle of one edge of the duvet cover 1, closed with a zip or hook and eye type material such as Velcro (registered trade mark). Within this pocket is a fleecy hood 6 that when released can sit over the head of user, so as to turn the whole duvet cover 1 into a cloak (see Figure 6) with a hood. The hood may be detachable for washing purposes or permanently fixed to the duvet cover by sewing. A second

feature allows for a fastening device 7 around the front of the 'cloak' to hold it onto the users shoulders.

[0051] Thus there has been described a novel arrangement which provides a blanket or similar bedding material that can be converted into a wrap for a child for whilst it is watching television, or a stuffed toy or cushion that can be left unobtrusively on seating in the television room. The convertible blanket may have use as a large stadium blanket, as a bedspread cover, as a cover for children while they are seated in the car and using seat belts, as a pillow or cushion, as a seat cushion, as a sleeping bag and as a lap blanket to name but a few possible uses.